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ASSESSMENT OF IDPs HIV/AIDS INFORMATION NEEDS AND UTILIZATION IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

Stephen Teryila AZA
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi

Dr. Jacob F. Tsegba
Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi- Nigeria.

Abstract
The study assessed HIV/AIDS information needs and utilization by IDPs in Benue State, Nigeria. The study sought to know the HIV/AIDS information needed by IDPs and examine the extent to which the HIV/AIDS information resources are made available and utilized by them. Five specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in 8 registered IDP camps in Benue State. The population of the study comprises of 399 participants from Abagena, Ortese, Daudu I, Daudu II, Gbajimba, Uikpam, Naka and Anyiin IDP camps. The instruments for data collection were checklist and structured questionnaire. Data was collected with the aid of six (6) trained research assistants using the IDPs' registers as sampling frame work. Frequency and simple percentages were used to analyze research question 2, while mean and standard deviation were used to analyze research questions 1, 3 4 and 5. The study revealed that majority of the IDPs have high interest and needs for HIV/AIDS information with a mean score of 3.8; donor agencies and medical officers' counseling activities were the most common HIV/AIDS information sources available to the IDPs with 92% and 93% respectively. The extent of HIV/AIDS information resources utilization is very low with a mean score of 2.4. Furthermore, the findings revealed certain barriers militating against the utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs in the study area to include lack of awareness on where to access HIV/AIDS information resources and Difficulty in understanding the Language of information resources. It was suggested that there should be increase in awareness of vital information contained in the print media and that HIV/AIDS information should be made available in IDP camps devoid of stigmatization and discrimination.

Keywords: Internally Displaced Persons, HIV/AIDS, Information Needs, Information Utilization

Introduction

Information has been regarded as an essential product for the development of man and the center of his day-to-day existence because every decision taken and choices made daily are the reflection of the quality and quantity of information available to the receiver. Information in a simple term refers to data that has been processed to give meaningful insight to enhance decision making i.e. it is the result of processing, manipulating and organizing data in a way that adds to the knowledge of the receiver. Information

generally implies data that has been collected about events in a given society, processed into messages for the purpose of consumption and dissemination to provide direction to the users for making informed decisions. Its role in the life of every individual and the society cannot be overstated.

Many scholars have viewed information and its uses in different scopes. Information according to Tubachi (2018) means the communication of knowledge about an event of a given condition or the spread of knowledge derived from observations, study or experience, while Slamecka (2018) maintained that i**nformation** is like raw material for the mind which **uses** it to develop skills, knowledge and wisdom that influences decision making. Information no doubt increases the level of certainty in any human decision process and that is why Zizlsperger (2012) posits that information is indispensable for human development. Every individual and the society has a peculiar need for information, this is because information is very vital and may be regarded as a resource that can liberate man.

Information has been very essential in the efforts meant to produce solutions to human and social problems including the numerous problems and challenges faced by the vulnerable groups in our society such as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This group of vulnerable people are known to have been forced to leave their ancestral homes and communities because of natural or man-made disasters. Some of the displaced persons who can afford a decent accommodation are settled in other communities and towns that are safe, while the destitute persons among the displaced, housed themselves in shelters known as IDP camps with terrible living conditions. In Benue State, there are many IDP camps today as a result of the arms conflict between farmers and herders which have displaced over 565,335 persons in more than 10 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state SEMA (2021). Many of these camps have families/ persons who are either infected or affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

According to National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) (2021), the information needed to fight HIV/AIDS is stated in the National Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS 2021-2025 which include: to provide health education, control of sexually transmitted diseases, establishment and managing of surveillance programmes, prevention of mother to child transmission, provision and management of antiretroviral therapy programmes, human resources development and government involvement.

However, the peculiar situation of IDPs may sometimes make communicating HIV/AIDS services to them to be challenging. According Akuto (2017), the challenges and conditions of IDPs include: insecurity, trauma and bitterness, hunger and starvation, acute malnutrition, sexual transmitted diseases, education, shelter and accommodation among others. In the IDP camps, the risk of transmission may have increased due to inadequate HIV information needs as well as the breakdown of social cohesion and infrastructures.

Thus, identifying the HIV/AIDS information needs and determining the extent of availability and utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs is anticipated to go a long way in improving the control and prevention as well as the management of

HIV/AIDS menace among IDPs and diminish the negative impact of the virus in human lives and the society at large. It is against this backdrop that the present study set out to assess HIV/AIDS information needs and utilization of information resources by IDPs in Benue state, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

It is evident that information is the most potent weapon available for the prevention, control and management of HIV/AIDS. It is also helpful for combating the spread of the virus among humans only when it is available and accessible to the right users. There are various information resources available today bearing HIV/AIDS messages which have aided in enlightening the general public about the dominant mode of HIV transmission and possible strategies for the prevention, control and management of the infection to minimize the chances of having new cases of HIV infections among IDP camps family members as well as other people.

However, it has been observed by the researcher that most of the HIV infected persons among the displaced persons are reported absent and lost-to-follow-up in their health care facilities thereby missing their medication due to lack of proper information needed to take care of their condition. Furthermore, it is also speculated that IDPs who are housed in IDP camps do not have easy access to information resources unlike the normal people living outside of the camps and therefore useful information may not have had so much impact on the IDPs. Without proper care, support and ART medications to help infected persons in the camps to be virally suppressed and coupled with dearth of information resources to help IDPs to be cautious and be safe from HIV infections have putting the entire IDPs at a very high risk of HIV transmission among themselves and the surrounding host communities.

This abnormality has been a thing of great concern and worry which has made the researcher to wonder what could actually be the HIV/AIDS information needs of IDPs in the camps, what are the HIV/AIDS information resources available in the camps, have IDPs been making use of most of the HIV/AIDS information resources available in the camps, are there barriers faced by IDPs in accessing HIV/AIDS information needs in the camps and what strategies could be adopted to enhance utilization of HIV/AIDS information needs of IDPs in camps. The study is therefore conducted to Assess HIV/AIDS Information Needs and Utilization by IDPs living in IDP camps in Benue State.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to conduct an Assessment of HIV/AIDS Information Needs and Utilization by IDPs in Benue State.

Specifically the study sought to:

1. Find out the HIV/AIDS information needs of IDPs in Benue State.
2. Ascertain HIV/AIDS information resources available in IDP camps in Benue State.
3. Determine the extent to which IDPs utilize HIV/AIDS information resources available in in Benue State camps.

4. Find out the barriers militating against the use of HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs in Benue State camps.
5. Identify strategies to be enhance utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs in Benue State camps.

Research Questions

1. What are the HIV/AIDS information needs of IDPs in Benue State camps?
2. What are the HIV/AIDS information resources available in Benue State IDP camps?
3. To what extent do IDPs utilize HIV/AIDS information resources in Benue State camps?
4. What are the barriers in accessing HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs in Benue State camps?
5. What are strategies that are needed can be adopted to enhance utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs in Benue State camps?

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is made up 155,521 registered participants in 30 IDP camps according to the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA). The sample size for the study is 399 participants. This is sampled out of the total population size of 155,521 participants. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane minimum sample size determination technique. The instruments for data collection is a 10 item Checklist titled "Available HIV/AIDS Information Resources Checklist" and a structured Questionnaire titled "Assessment of HIV/AIDS Information Needs and Utilization by IDPs Questionnaire (AHINUIRQ)" developed by the researcher. The checklist and questionnaire were administered to the participants with the help of six (6) research assistants. The researcher engaged the services of the assistants after they were adequately trained on the task ahead and they received instructions on the processes involved for data collection in the field. Descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data obtained for this study. Frequency counts, simple percentage, mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation score of HIV/AIDS information needs of IDPs

SN	HIV/AIDS information needs	Mean	S.D	Rank	Rem
1	Information about HIV testing services near your current location	3.8	0.37	3rd	Agr
2	Information about how to get enrolled on treatment (ART)	3.7	0.47	5th	Agr
3	Information about antiretroviral drugs (ARV) refill	3.7	0.46	5th	Agr
4	Information about HIV/AIDS prevention	3.9	0.33	1st	Agr
5	Information about how to have HIV free children	3.8	0.36	3rd	Agr
6	Information on government policies and plans towards HIV/AIDS	3.9	0.37	1st	Agr
	Average	**3.8**	**0.39**		**Agr**

Table 1 above revealed the responses of the respondents from questionnaire on their HIV/AIDS information needs in the 8 IDP camps. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 provided mean scores of 3.8, 3.7, 3.7, 3.9, 3.8, and 3.9 respectively. All the six (6) items had mean scores which were above the criterion mean score of 2.50 used for decision making and as such showed agree to all the items raised. Furthermore, items 4 and 6 are ranked 1st meaning that the majority of the respondents need information about how to have HIV free children as well as information on government policies and plans towards HIV/AIDS. Items 1 and 5 ranked 3rd while items 2 and 3 are ranked 5th implying that less people care about information on how to get enrolled on treatment (ART) nor information about antiretroviral drugs (ARV) refills. Summarily, with the overall average mean score of 3.8 implied agree which means that respondents are in serious need of HIV/AIDS information in the study area.

Table 2: Frequency Count and Percentage Score of the Information Resources Available in the IDP Camps (Source: Research field survey (2023).

SN	Information Resources	A		NA		REMARK
		Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	
1	Magazines/Newspapers	26	7	373	93	Not Available
2	Pamphlets	84	21	315	79	Not Available
3	Billboards/Posters	102	26	297	74	Not Available
4	Flyers	101	25	298	75	Not Available
5	Radio programs	53	13	346	87	Not Available
6	Religious bodies	148	37	251	63	Not Available
7	Workshop/Seminars	120	30	279	70	Not Available
8	ARV Trail centers	0	0	399	100	Not Available
9	Medical officers' counseling activities	372	93	27	7	Available
10	Donor agencies	369	92	30	8	Available
	Average	**138**	**34**	**262**	**66**	**Not Available**

Table 2 above reflect multiple responses from the checklist with respect to the information resources available in the 8 sampled IDP camps in Benue State. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 obtained 26 (7%), 84 (21%), 102 (26 %), 101 (25%), 53 (13%), 148 (37%), 120 (30%), 0(0%), 369 (92 %) and 372 (93 %) respectively. It was shown in items 9 and 10 that donor agencies and medical officers' counseling activities ranked the highest at 369 (92 %) and 372 (93 %) respectively indicating the most common information resources available to IDPs to get their HIV/AIDS information in the camp. Unfortunately, item 8 obtained 0% implying that ARV trail centers could not be found in any of the 8 IDP camps. Summarily, the overall rate of availability of HIV/AIDS information resources in these camps was 34% which is below the benchmark of 50% for decision making and which revealed that HIV/AIDS information resources are not sufficiently available for internally displaced persons in the study area.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Score of the Extent of utilization of HIV/AIDS Information Resources by IDPs in camps Benue State.

SN	Extent of utilization of HIV/AIDS Information Resources	Mean	S.D	Rank	Rem
1.	It helps to clear away the fear of stigmatization and Discrimination	2.3	1.01	4th	Low Extent
2	It provides information on the latest development on the vaccines to cure HIV/AIDS	2.5	0.95	3rd	High Extent
3.	It helps to satisfy nutritional needs	1.9	0.77	5th	Low Extent
4.	It provides information on drug side effects	1.8	0.75	6th	Low Extent
5.	It provides information on the proper use of condom	3.0	1	1st	High Extent
6.	It provides information on NGOs' activities on HIV/AIDS	2.9	0.92	2nd	High Extent
	Average	**2.4**	**0.9**		**Low Extent**

Table 3 above showed the responses on the extent of utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by internally displaced persons in the study area. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 provided mean scores of 2.3, 2.5, 1.9, 1.8, 3.0 and 2.9 respectively. Items 2, 5 and 6 had mean scores which were above the criterion mean score of 2.50 used for decision making and as such showed high extent to the items raised, while items 1, 3 and 4 had mean scores below the criterion mean score of 2.50 implying a low extent to the item raised. Furthermore, item 5 was ranked 1st which indicated that information on the proper use of condom followed by item 6 ranked 2nd implying that information on NGOs' activities on HIV/AIDS are the mostly utilized in the area of study, while item 4 ranked 6th indicating the lowest of the information utilized. Summarily, with an average mean score of 2.4, it implied that HIV/AIDS information resources were utilized at a low extent by internally displaced persons in Benue State camps.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Score of the barriers against utilization of HIV/AIDS Information Resources by IDPs in Benue State camps.

SN	Barriers against utilization of HIV/AIDS Information Resources	Mean	S.D	Rank	Remar
1	Lack of awareness on where to access HIV/AIDS information resources	3.2	0.75	2nd	Agree
2.	Lack of suitable information to meet people's HIV/AIDS information needs	2.3	0.94	5th	Disagree
3.	Low literacy level	3	0.92	4th	Agree
4.	Information materials not explicit enough	2.2	0.85	6th	Disagree
5.	Difficulty in understanding the Language of the information materials	3.3	0.78	1st	Agree
6.	Attitude of people towards information about HIV/AIDS for fear of stigma & discrimination	3.1	0.72	3rd	Agree
	Average	**2.9**	**0.83**		**Agree**

Table 4 above reflects the responses of respondents on the identifiable barriers to access HIV/AIDS information in the IDP camps. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 obtained mean scores of 3.2, 2.3, 3.0, 2.2, 3.3, and 3.1 respectively. Items 1, 3, 5 and 6 had mean scores which were above the criterion mean score of 2.50 used for decision making and as such showed agreement with the items raised while items 2 and 4 had mean scores below the criterion mean score of 2.50 implying a disagreement to the item raised. Furthermore, item 5 was ranked the 1st indicating the presence of difficulties for respondent in understanding the Language of the information materials among IDPs. While item 4 was ranked 6th among the items raised. Summarily, with an average mean score of 2.9, it implied that there are certain barriers militating IDPs' access of HIV/AIDS information resources in the study area.

Table 5: Ways to Enhance Access to HIV/AIDS Information Resources by IDPs in in Benue State camps

SN	Ways to Enhance Access to HIV/AIDS Information Resources	Mean	S.D	Rank	Rema
1.	Increase awareness in the camp on the vital information contained in the print media	3.8	0.36	4th	Agree
2.	HIV/AIDS information should be made available in IDP camps devoid of stigmatization and discrimination.	3.9	0.35	1st	Agree
3.	Provision of system to seek redress in the event of discrimination and other infringements of the rights of people due to their HIV status.	3.6	0.50	6th	Agree
4.	The government/NGOs should organize workshops/rural campaign in the camp.	3.9	0.29	1st	Agree
5.	Printed materials should be written in pidgin and local languages with illustration to help people understand basic information better.	3.9	0.28	1st	Agree
6.	HIV/AIDS information should be communicated through religious bodies.	3.7	0.45	5th	Agree
	Average	**3.8**	**0.37**		**Agree**

Table 5 above illustrates suggestions from respondents on other ways that can be adopted to increase utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by the IDPs. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 presented means scores of 3.8, 3.9, 3.6, 3.9, 3.9 and 3.7 respectively. It is interesting to note that all the items had mean scores which were above the criterion mean score of 2.50 indicating agreement with all the items raised above. However, items 2, 4 and 5 were ranked 1st showing strong agreement with the items raised while item 3 was ranked 6th among the items raised. Summarily, with an average mean score of 3.8, it implied strong agreement to ways suggested for adoption to enhance access to HIV/AIDS information resources in Benue State

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings, internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the camps are in serious need of HIV/AIDS information. This finding disagrees with Gever and Ottah (2020) who concluded that there is general low interest in HIV/AIDS information among IDPs, but however the findings are in consonance with Sambo (2017) who reported that IDPs needs information to understand their health better. It also confirms the study of Edewor (2010) who reported that respondents need information on ARV medication, drug availability and affordability.

Secondly, the study revealed that donor agencies and medical officers' counseling activities are the most common information resources readily available to IDPs to get their HIV/AIDS information in the camp.

Findings of the study further indicated that, HIV/AIDs information resources are utilised at a very low extent by the internally displaced persons. This is may be as a result of the low provision of HIV/AIDS information resources to the camps, and thereby leading to low level of utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources by IDPs in Benue State as indicated in table 4. These findings tolls the same direction with the outcome of the study conducted by Enwereji (2009) which revealed that none of the organizations, including governmental institutions, provided social services or assistance in prevention of HIV/AIDS, voluntary counseling and confidential testing, gender violence, education, and health.

Furthermore, it was revealed from the findings that respondents face some barriers which hindered them from utilizing HIV/AIDS information resources as shown in table 6. These findings are supported by Adeoye and Popoola (2011) who reported that, most of the respondents were of the opinion that lack of difficulty in understanding language of the information materials were responsible for their inability to use the materials. A good number of the respondents identified lack of awareness on where to access information as a barrier.

Strategies adopted to enhance utilization of HIV/AIDS information resources were revealed by respondents as organization of HIV/AIDS workshops/seminars by Government and NGOs for IDPs in the camp, printed materials should be written in pidgin and local languages with illustration to help people better understand basic information, HIV/AIDS information should be made available in IDP camps devoid of stigmatization and discrimination. The findings toll the same direction as Hogan and Palmer (2005) and Igbo and Imo (2010) who opined that information materials should be published in simple languages which one can read and understand easily as well as that of Stores, Gama and Tukur (2016) who revealed that the solution to the problem was the use of the language that can easily be understood by the targeted audience and increasing awareness on the vital information the print media contain. The findings supported that of Edewor (2010) who suggested that workshops and seminars in this regard should be encouraged by libraries. Library and information service professionals should collaborate with NGOs and other agencies to disseminate information.

Conclusion

Based on the result of this study, it is concluded that, IDPs need HIV/AIDS information resources in their camps. However, not much have been done to avail these information to the IDPs by way of organizing workshops/seminars while print media are not equally readily made available in the IDP camps for IDPs. HIV/AIDS information communication is a delicate matter and it is a shared responsibility that is not limited to health sector alone but all stakeholders in the society. Therefore, sufficient information can lead to effective management and control of the deadly disease which would lead to positive impact on the socio-economic and political sustainability of our society. Thus, sufficient information, resourcefulness, synergy, and teamwork from all stakeholders is required to fight against HIV/AIDS epidemic in the society to achieve sustainable development necessary for the progress of humanity.

Recommendations

Based on the result of this study, the researcher recommends that:

1. To effectively communicate HIV/AIDs information to IDPs in camps, opinion leaders should be engaged and trained on communicating HIV/AIDS information to IDPs.
2. Information about HIV/AIDs aimed at reaching IDPs should be packaged in a language that will be understood by Internally Displaced people in Camps.
3. To encourage the provision of HIV/AIDS information resources to IDPs, efforts should be geared toward information repackaging to address specific their HIV/AIDS information needs.
4. HIV/AIDS policy should be initiated and implemented specially for the IDPs for sustainable development.
5. The government and other stakeholders should technically strategise on HIV/AIDS campaign initiative in IDP camps and their host communities by mandating the State and Local Action Committee on AIDS (SACA & LACA) to intensify their effort by organizing weekly seminars/workshops in IDP camps where professionals can address IDPs in their mother tongue. Public libraries can as well help to repackage information on HIV/AIDS in the mother tongue of IDPs.

The implementation of all these will equip IDPs with the needed HIV/AIDS information to ensure a significant change to the present challenges.

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